

MISSISSIPPI DELEGATION UNITED IN SUPPORT FOR DISASTER DECLARATION

Federal Lawmakers Endorse Barbour Request for Disaster Aid Following Tornadoes

April 28, 2010

WASHINGTON, D.C. – All members of the Mississippi congressional delegation today signaled their united support for approval of a federal disaster designation that would sanction federal recovery resources to help Mississippians recover from a deadly storm that tore across the state Saturday, killing 10 people and destroying scores of homes.

The delegation today sent President Obama a letter endorsing the disaster application submitted by Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour. The letter was signed by U.S. Senators Thad Cochran and Roger Wicker and U.S. Representatives Bennie Thompson, Gene Taylor, Travis Childers and Gregg Harper.

“We know from our ongoing recovery from the effects of Hurricane Katrina, which hit our state in August 2005, that significant resources and cooperation are necessary to recover fully from natural disasters as quickly as possible. We stand ready to face this new challenge by supporting the local communities, the State, and your administration as we work together to rebuild and renew areas destroyed by this major storm,” the lawmakers wrote to the President.

The letter also notes the ongoing economic hardship of the affected areas, as well as the need for Congress to replenish funding for the Disaster Recovery Fund administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). A supplemental appropriations bill pending before Congress would add \$5.1 billion to the FEMA fund.

Members of the congressional delegation have been consulting with Barbour, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency and local officials as recovery efforts get underway. The issuance of a presidential disaster declaration, as requested by the state, would trigger the

release of federal disaster assistance. Barbour's initial federal disaster declaration request would encompass Choctaw and Yazoo counties, with other Mississippi counties expected to be added as damage assessments across the state are compiled.

The following is the text of the congressional delegation's letter to the President:

Dear President Obama,

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In the wake of devastating weather events across the Southeastern United States this past weekend, we are writing to request your full consideration of Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour's request for a federal disaster declaration for Yazoo County, Mississippi and Choctaw County, Mississippi.

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We also understand that the State of Mississippi and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) jointly continue to assess the damage across the state, particularly in Attala, Holmes Monroe, Union, and Warren Counties.□ It is our understanding that Governor Barbour will request a federal disaster declaration in Holmes County sometime today.□ Should Governor Barbour request federal disaster declarations for these or other counties, we are hopeful you will also give these requests your full consideration.

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We have been encouraged by the efforts of FEMA to deploy rapidly to Mississippi to assist state and local officials in estimating the severity of the initial damage caused by a series of tornado touchdowns, some rated as devastating as EF-4.□ The latest estimates show that 10 Mississippi lives have been lost and hundreds homes have been destroyed.□ Much of this

destruction has occurred in parts of our state that have been particularly affected by our nation's current economic situation. Many of these counties have poverty levels that are more than double the national average.

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Examination of National Weather Service data shows that these tornado touchdowns were some of the most extreme in Mississippi's history. Preliminary estimations show that one of the touchdowns was 1.75 miles wide at some points and stayed touched down for 149 miles, carving a path of destruction across the heart of our state. If these estimates hold, this storm event will lay claim to the widest tornado in Mississippi's history and the fourth longest touchdown distance in our state's history.

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We know from our ongoing recovery from the effects of Hurricane Katrina, which hit our state in August 2005, that significant resources and cooperation are necessary to recover fully from natural disasters as quickly as possible. We stand ready to face this new challenge by supporting the local communities, the State, and your administration as we work together to rebuild and renew areas destroyed by this major storm.

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We are also very aware of the depleted status of the FEMA Disaster Relief Fund and the potential effect a disaster declaration for this past weekend's events in Mississippi could have on its solvency. We are hopeful that the Disaster Relief Fund will be replenished as soon as possible so that federal assistance for this and other disasters can flow freely to states in need.

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Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you need further assistance in this effort.